



News digest 2
Q2, 2004

Dear partners, friends, and colleagues,

We hope you will be interested in the following news digest from the Meningitis Vaccine Project (MVP). Its purpose is to let you know about recent, current, and upcoming activities at MVP. We welcome your comments and suggestions at info@meningvax.org and encourage you to forward this update to friends or colleagues who might be interested in learning about MVP's progress.

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Vaccine development activities

- After review by the MVP Project Management Committee, MVP has completed all negotiations and has launched the program partnerships as follows: with Serum Institute of India Limited in Pune, India, to support the industrial scale-up, testing and production of a group A meningococcal conjugate vaccine, as well as tetanus toxoid for the carrier; with the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) in Rockville, USA, for a conjugation process developed by Drs. Carl E. Frasch and Robert Lee Che-Hung; and with SynCo Bio Partners in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, for the meningitis A polysaccharide.
- PATH entered into a long term sublicense and supply agreement with Serum Institute of India Limited to develop, test, and produce clinical and commercial lots of group A meningococcal conjugate vaccine. The Phase 1 trial of this vaccine will begin by January 2005. The vaccine has a target price of US\$ 0.40 per dose.

Clinical activities

- Preliminary visits were made to five potential clinical testing sites, including three departments of clinical pharmacology in Mumbai and Hyderabad, India; Wellcome Trust, Medical College in Blantyre, Malawi; and Centre pour les Vaccins en Développement, Ministry of Health, Bamako, Mali. Follow-up visits to some of these sites will be conducted later this year.

Surveillance activities

- Dr. Mamoudou Djingarey joined the MVP team in April 2004. He designs and conducts applied research aimed at enhancing integrated meningococcal disease surveillance and epidemic response in meningitis belt countries. For a short biography of Dr. Djingarey, please visit <http://www.meningvax.org/team.htm#major>.

- The Multi-Disease Surveillance and Control (MDSC) team based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, supported countries in strengthening meningitis surveillance by producing and disseminating a weekly feedback bulletin to countries and partners.
- The MDSC team visited Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Togo with the goal of reviewing the implementation of recommendations made during the annual meeting on enhanced meningitis surveillance in Africa held in Lomé, Togo, in November 2003. Working sessions included integrated disease surveillance and response, laboratory, data management at the ministries of Health, and World Health Organization (WHO) country offices. In addition, other topics included assessment of Standard Operating Procedures for enhanced meningitis surveillance and guidance on the development and implementation of a meningitis epidemic preparedness and response plan for the country. Installation and training on software specific for epidemiology, health mapping, and laboratory data management were also done.

Epidemiological research

- Country visits to Chad, Burkina Faso, and Mali were done to review data on epidemic meningitis and to review country information particularly on past meningococcal vaccine use.

Communication and introduction strategy

- MVP made presentations at the following meetings:
 - Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization meeting, PATH office, Ferney-Voltaire, France, April 26-30.
 - Fifth Advanced Vaccinology Course 2004 (ADVACS), Mérieux Foundation, Annecy, France, May 10-21.
 - Accelerated Vaccine Introduction Priority Project retreat, Geneva, Switzerland, June 2-3.
 - Global Vaccine Research meeting, Montreux, Switzerland, June 7-10. Dr. LaForce and the MDSC team presented MVP and the outputs/results of the enhanced meningitis surveillance 2003 and 2004 activities.
 - Course on Surveillance, WHO research center, Meningococcal Disease Surveillance, Lausanne, Switzerland, June 30.
- An outline for strategic vaccine introduction has been developed and sent to the WHO/AFRO regional office in Harare, Zimbabwe. Plans are being made for the preparation of a vaccine introduction workshop in Harare this fall.

That's all for now from the MVP team. Stay tuned for our next news digest (due October 2004). We look forward to receiving your comments at info@meningvax.org.

Created in 2001, the Meningitis Vaccine Project is a partnership between the World Health Organization (WHO) and Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH). The mission of MVP is to eliminate epidemic meningitis as a public health problem in sub-Saharan Africa through the development, testing, introduction, and widespread use of conjugate meningococcal vaccines.

For more information on MVP, please visit our website at <http://www.meningvax.org>.